

## Cover Sheet

DATE: 7/24/2018

SUBJECT: Increase in number of HIV diagnoses among persons who report injection drug use

### INSTRUCTIONS:

**DISTRIBUTE** to your local HAN contacts. This HAN is intended for general sharing of information.

- Time for Forwarding: **As Soon As Possible**
- Please forward to DPHHS at [hhshan@mt.gov](mailto:hhshan@mt.gov)
- **Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own**

For LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT reference only

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

DPHHS CDCP  
Epidemiology Section  
1-406-444-0273

DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:  
1-800-701-5769

DPHHS HAN Website:  
[www.han.mt.gov](http://www.han.mt.gov)

**REMOVE THIS COVER SHEET BEFORE REDISTRIBUTING AND REPLACE IT WITH YOUR OWN**

Please ensure that DPHHS is included on your HAN distribution list.  
[hhshan@mt.gov](mailto:hhshan@mt.gov)

### Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Information Service:** passes along low level priority messages that do not fit other HAN categories and are for informational purposes only.

Please update your HAN contact information on the Montana Public Health Directory

# *DPHHS HAN*

## Information Sheet



**Date:** July 24, 2018

**Subject:** Increase in number of HIV diagnoses among persons who report injection drug use

**Background:** Public health officials have seen an increasing number of HIV diagnoses among persons who report injection drug use. Please see the attached HAN message for more information and recommendations on this subject.

**Information:** During the first six months of 2018, public health officials investigated 11 new cases of HIV infection. While this number is lower compared to 2017 when 15 cases were investigated, almost half reported injecting drugs as a risk factor compared to an average of 22% in earlier years.

### **Recommendations:**

#### Health Departments:

Share this HAN message with providers in your area.

#### Health Care Providers:

1. Assess high-risk patients and counsel people who inject drugs (PWID) to consider either stopping injection and other drug use or take steps to protect themselves and others and encourage the use of latex condoms when having sex.
2. Discuss testing for hepatitis C and vaccines for Hepatitis B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), both of which can be transmitted sexually and potentially prevented by vaccination.
3. Report cases of HIV and other reportable conditions promptly to local public health officials to ensure actions are taken to prevent further spread and make appropriate referrals for medical care and other services.

# NEWS

*“Improving and Protecting the Health, Well-Being and Self-Reliance of All Montanans.”*



Department of Public Health and Human Services

[www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 2018

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936  
Chuck Council, Communications Specialist, DPHHS, (406) 444-4391

## HIV infection among Montana injection drug users on the rise

State and local public health officials have seen an increasing number of HIV diagnoses among persons who report injection drug use.

During the first six months of 2018, 11 new cases of HIV infection were investigated by public health officials. While this number is lower compared to 2017 when 15 cases were investigated, almost half reported injecting drugs as a risk factor compared to an average of 22% in earlier years.

“The current increase in IV drug associated infection is concerning in that people are putting themselves and their partners at risk,” says DPHHS HIV epidemiologist Helen McCaffrey.

The risk of becoming infected with HIV, or other blood borne diseases is very high if a person shares needles or injection equipment, or “works”, with someone who has HIV or another blood borne disease. This is because sharing needles and syringes is a direct route of transmission.

Injection drug use can also cause other diseases and complications. “HIV is major concern, but sharing needles puts people at risk for getting other infections like hepatitis B and C and both can lead to severe liver disease,” says Dana Fejes of the STD/HIV Prevention program.

Substance abuse may also increase the risk of obtaining other sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or unwanted pregnancy. When people are using drugs, they are more likely to have unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners, which puts them at greater risk for other STDs.

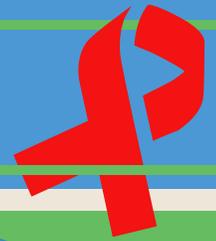
To lower an individual’s risk of HIV infection or other blood borne infections, public health authorities recommend the following:

- Stopping injection and other drug use. If you keep injecting drugs, use only sterile needles and works. Never share needles or works.
- Talk to your partner about HIV and other STDs and use latex condoms every time you have sex.

- Have an honest and open discussion with your health care provider about your sexual history and ask if you should be tested for HIV and other STDs.
- Your provider can also discuss testing for hepatitis C as well as vaccines for conditions like hepatitis B and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), both of which can be transmitted sexually.

In addition, health care providers are encouraged to assess and test patients for HIV infection. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that individuals between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care and those with risk factors get tested more frequently. A general rule for those with risk factors is to get tested at least annually.

If you are looking for a free HIV test or a place to exchange or dispose of needles, please visit our DPHHS website at [GetTested.MT.gov](http://GetTested.MT.gov) to find an anonymous testing or syringe exchange location. More information about HIV, STDs, and Hepatitis C and ways to protect yourself from these diseases are available at our website.



## YEAR TO DATE HIV UPDATES - 2018

**11 newly diagnosed HIV cases have been reported to DPHHS in the first half of 2018. 15 cases were diagnosed during the same time in 2017. Injecting drug use (IDU) is increasingly seen as a risk factor for 2018. Of the 11 HIV cases reported in 2018, 8 (73%) reported IDU or sexual contact with an IDU as a risk factor.**

**100% of the newly positive HIV individuals who were interviewed for partners and risk.**

**33 partners were identified. Of those, 22 were tested for HIV, while 11 could not be found.**

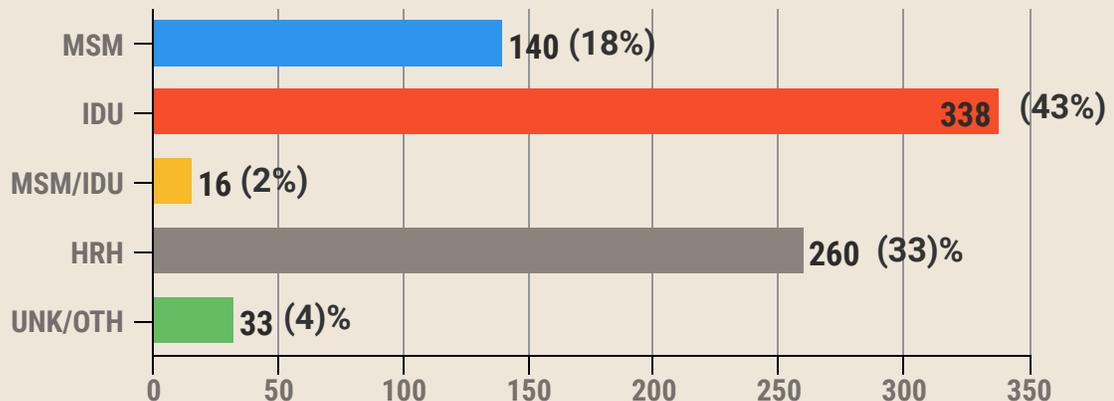


# 787



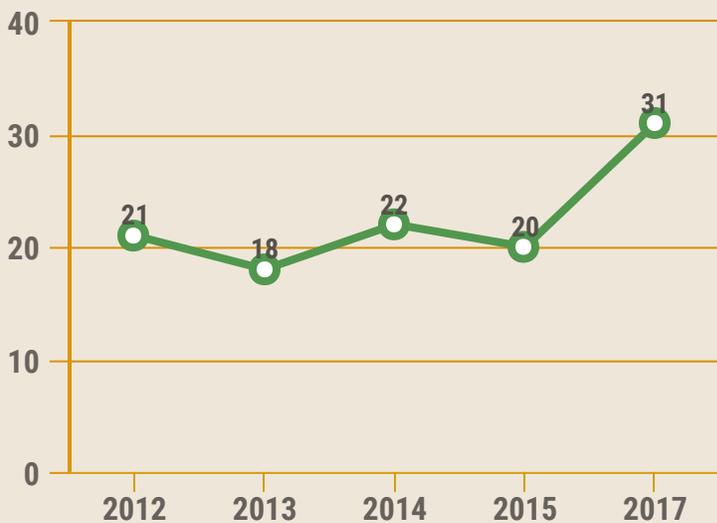
**Rapid HIV tests, including one positive, were performed by HIV Prevention Program contractors in the 1st and 2nd quarters of 2018.**

### 2018 Rapid HIV Testing by Risk Category

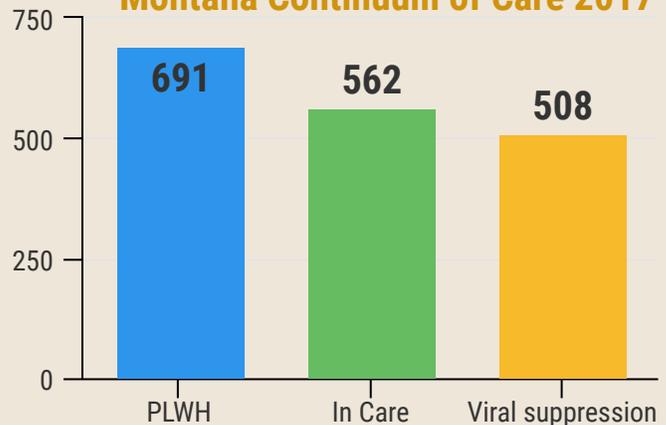


MSM = Men who have sex with men, IDU = Injecting drug user, HRH = High risk heterosexual

### Diagnosed HIV cases in Montana 2012-2017



### Montana Continuum of Care 2017



**In 2017, there were 691 persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) in Montana. 81% are in care and of those, 90% achieved viral suppression.**